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Editorial

Even if the risk is slight, even potentially nonexistent, those entities that provide drinking water and the government whose mission is to safeguard general health and safety have a duty to quickly inform the public about any anomalies.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency wrongly chose a public forum Thursday to announce, without prior notice, that levels of the solvent trichloroethylene, or TCE, at nearly twice the federal standard were detected to be possibly present for eight days last month in treated drinking water from a Scottsdale plant that was to serve mostly Paradise Valley and some Scottsdale customers of a private provider. A Tribune reporter, there to cover other issues related to water treatment that were given previous public notice, was able to report the surprise TCE announcement.

A Friday letter about the meeting to EPA Administrator Stephen Johnson from U.S. Rep. Harry Mitchell, D-Ariz., correctly took the EPA to task for telling residents about the situation weeks after its discovery.

It was at the point of discovery when, in addition to testing the water - a right move - officials should have announced what was being done, and what the risks to public health were, if any.